CLAIMS

Having thus described our invention, what we claim as new, and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. A method of performing at least one transaction between a consumer from a plurality of consumers and a merchant from a plurality of merchants, the plurality of consumers and the plurality of merchants utilizing computing devices connected to a network, said method comprising the following steps of:

providing a token to at least one clearing server;

communicating a request for an update key to said at least one clearing server;

determining an amount paid by the consumer to a previous merchant if said token has been previously used; and

providing said update key, said update key being used as an authorization to modify the value of said token.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of providing said token comprises a step of the consumer purchasing said token form said at least one clearing server, said at least one clearing server using computing devices connected to the network.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said purchasing step is performed by the consumer providing to said at least one clearing server personal information regarding the consumer and financial information regarding a payment instrument to be used by the consumer.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said financial instrument is a credit card.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein said financial instrument is a cash card.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing said token comprises a step of the consumer retrieving a previously purchased token from said at least one clearing server.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of providing said token further comprising a step of selecting for purchase at least one quote from a plurality of quotes of goods and services, said plurality of quotes of goods and services and their prices being displayed on the computing devices utilized by the plurality of merchants.

5   8. The method of claim 7, wherein said step of providing said token further comprising a step of presenting to the merchant said token and said selected for purchase at least one quote.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising steps of:

combining into a total price prices of all said selected for purchase at least one quote;

10   rejecting said transaction if a value of said token is less then the said total price; and

communicating to said at least one clearing server said token, said total price, and a request for said update key.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said step of determining said amount paid is performed by polling said previous merchant to receive at least two information uploads

15   from the merchant to said at least one clearing server.

11. A method of performing at least one transaction between a consumer from a plurality of consumers and a merchant from a plurality of merchants, each of said plurality of consumers and each of said plurality of merchants utilizing one or more computing devices, the one or more computing devices being connected to a network, said method comprising

20   the following steps of:

the consumer receiving a token;

the consumer selecting for purchase at least one quote from a plurality of price quotes of goods and services, said plurality of price quotes of goods and services being displayed on the computing devices utilized by the plurality of merchants;

25   the consumer communicating a request for a purchase to the merchant;

the merchant communicating a request for an update key, said update key being used as an authorization to modify the value of the token;

determining an amount paid by the consumer to a previous merchant if said token has been previously used; and

providing said update key.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said step of the consumer receiving said token further comprises a step of maintaining said token in memory of the one or more computing devices.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said step of the consumer selecting further comprises a step of the consumer establishing at least one data path from the one or more computing devices used by the consumer to the one or more computing devices used by the merchant.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said step of the consumer communicating said request further comprising a step of the consumer forwarding said token from the one or more computing devices used by the consumer to the one or more computing devices used by the merchant.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein said step of the merchant communicating a request for said update key further comprising a step forwarding said token from the one or more computing devices used by the merchant to a clearing server, said clearing server using one or more computing devices.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein said step of determining an amount paid further comprising a step of comparing said token forwarded by said merchant to said token received by the consumer to establishing whether said token has been previously used.

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17. The method of claim 16, wherein said step of providing said update key further comprising a step of sending said update key from the one or more computing devices used by said clearing server to the one or more computing devices used by the merchant.

18. A computer program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a
5 program of instructions executable by a machine to perform method steps for performing at least one transaction between a consumer from a plurality of consumers and a merchant from a plurality of merchants, each of said plurality of consumers and each of said plurality of merchants utilizing one or more computing devices, the one or more computing devices being connected to a network, said method comprising the following steps of:

10   the consumer receiving a token;

        the consumer selecting for purchase at least one quote from a plurality of price quotes of goods and services, said plurality of price quotes of goods and services being displayed on the computing devices utilized by the plurality of merchants;

        the consumer communicating a request for a purchase to the merchant;

15   the merchant communicating a request for an update key, said update key being used as an authorization to modify the value of the token;

        determining an amount paid by the consumer to a previous merchant if said token has been previously used; and

        providing said update key.